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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3382  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000411

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: ITURI: MILITIAS CONTINUE TO ATTACK FARDC POSITIONS

REF: KINSHASA 359

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) According to MONUC officials, elements of the Patriotic Force for Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) militia continue to attack positions of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) in Ituri District. Although Operation Ituri Engraver ceased activities over a week ago (reftel), FARDC and MONUC troops are still engaging in sporadic firefights against various militias. New fighting is focused on the strategic commercial crossroads village of Bogoro, approximately 20km south of Bunia.

¶2. (C) Internal MONUC planning documents report remnant FRPI militias fired on MONUC Bangladeshi peacekeepers the night of March 8 along the Kagaba-Bogoro road. Militia members also reportedly burned down houses while fleeing counterattacks. MONUC reports the area is presently under MONUC and FARDC control, and patrols along the trade road are being conducted daily.

¶3. (C) MONUC and Ituri District officials told PolCouns and PolOff heavier fighting broke out between militias and the FARDC early on the morning of March 10 near Bogoro. MONUC military officials said MONUC attack helicopters responded to the attack and quickly pushed back the militia offensive. MONUC officials added that elements of the Moroccan and Pakistani peacekeeping battalions were subsequently dispatched to Bogoro to reinforce FARDC positions. Bogoro remains under FARDC control, but the security situation there is deteriorating, according to these same officials.

¶4. (C) MONUC-Bunia Head of Office Sharouh Sharif told PolOff the FRPI is using the cessation of Ituri Engraver to rearm and regroup. Sharif said MONUC has received unconfirmed reports the FRPI is receiving illegal weapons shipments from across the border with Uganda. In addition, Sharif said MONUC has also received reports that elements of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) -- based in northern Ituri -- have been aiding and rearming the FRPI.

¶5. (C) In separate incidents, FARDC positions in Nioka (approximately 20km north of Bunia) were attacked the night of March 7 by different militia elements, most likely from the MRC. Internal MONUC documents report four FARDC troops were killed and seven were wounded in the fighting. MONUC reports the FARDC March 8 succeeding in regaining control over Nioka. The nights of March 6 and 8, militia forces also attacked FARDC positions in Dhera (10km from Nioka), reportedly using AK-47s and mortars. FARDC has reported no casualties during the Dhera fighting.

¶6. (C) Comment: The recent militia attacks on the FARDC in

Ituri represent a possible resurgence of militia activity. Following the suspension of Ituri Engraver -- and after the conclusion of similar operations earlier in the year -- the Ituri militias have used every break in fighting to regain their strength. Reports of alliances between militias are also troubling, as they indicate efforts to expand a network of cooperation which could further destabilize the fragile peace in the region. Furthermore, the continuing reports of arms shipments across the Uganda border demonstrate the FARDC is far from being able to eliminate such cross-border trafficking and thus the militia threat itself. The delay in reinforcing the FARDC with additional troops after the Aveba mutiny gives militias an additional opportunity to rearm and regroup. End comment.  
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